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Battlefields as Heritage Resources: the United Kingdom Experience

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Battlefields as Heritage Resources: the United Kingdom Experience

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Simon Marsh

Simon Marsh
Battlefields Trust
research@battlefieldstrust.com

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ABSTRACT: How battlefields are remembered and memorialised in the UK has changed over time. From places for important religious intercession in the medieval period, commemoration through the living and written documents in the early modern era to places of antiquarian interest in the eighteenth century. The experience of world wars in the twentieth century created a quasi-medieval attitude toward the battlefields of those conflicts, but earlier sites of battle have increasingly become a focus because of their heritage value. The landscape and archaeology of conflict are the most obvious aspects of such value, but tourism, education, and the creation of a sense of identity or place are equally important, though more intangible, aspects. Interpretation is key to realising the heritage value in such intangibility. Only in the last 25 years or so have steps been taken in the UK to protect and promote battlefields as heritage assets in a systematic way. The establishment in 1992 of the Battlefields Trust, a national charity, dedicated to battlefield advocacy was followed by the scheduling of nationally important battlefields in England by the government's heritage body, Historic England. The devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales subsequently followed suit and battlefield in Britain now have limited protection from development, although not from other threats. Whilst actively protecting battlefields, the Battlefields Trust works with local battlefield groups and amenity societies to explain and interpret sites of conflict to make them more than 'just a field'.

KEYWORDS: Battlefield, archaeology, landscape, tourism, education, development

RESUMEN: El modo de recordar y memorizar los campos de batalla en el Reino Unido ha cambiado con el paso del tiempo: de ser considerados sitios de importante intercesión religiosa en el período medieval, pasando por su conmemoración a través de documentos vivos y escritos en la era moderna temprana, hasta convertirse en lugares de interés anticuario en el siglo XVIII. La experiencia de las guerras mundiales en el siglo XX dio paso a una actitud casi medieval hacia sus campos de batalla. Sin embargo, estos campos han ido adquiriendo más importancia debido a su valor patrimonial. El paisaje y la arqueología del conflicto son los aspectos que más destacan de dicho valor, pero el turismo, la educación y la creación de un sentido de la identidad o del lugar son otros aspectos igualmente importantes, aunque más intangibles. La interpretación es clave para analizar el valor intangible del patrimonio. Solamente en los últimos 25 años, aproximadamente, se han tomado medidas en el Reino Unido para proteger y promover los campos de batalla como activos patrimoniales de manera sistemática. Tras el establecimiento en 1992 de *Battlefields Trust*, una organización benéfica nacional dedicada a la defensa de los campos de batalla, el organismo histórico del gobierno, *Historic England*, se encargó de gestionar aquellos campos de batalla de importancia nacional en Inglaterra. Posteriormente, las administraciones delegadas en Escocia y Gales siguieron su ejemplo y actualmente el campo de batalla en Gran Bretaña cuenta con una protección limitada ante el desarrollo, aunque no contra otras amenazas. Además de proteger activamente los campos de batalla, *Battlefields Trust* trabaja con grupos locales de campos de batalla y sociedades de servicios a fin de explicar e interpretar los lugares de conflicto y convertirlos en algo más que «un simple campo».

PALABRAS CLAVE: Campo de batalla, arqueología, paisaje, turismo, educación, desarrollo

BATTLEFIELDS AS HERITAGE RESOURCES – THE UNITED KINGDOM EXPERIENCE

The British statesman Sir Winston Churchill reportedly once famously described battles as «the punctuation marks of history», recognising that their impact often goes beyond a military outcome (English Heritage, 1995). Lasting often only a few hours at most, battles have sometimes brought about profound political change. In England, Hastings (1066) resulted in the replacement of Anglo-Saxon rule with that of the Normans whilst Bosworth (1485) ended the Plantagenet royal dynasty, ushering in the Tudors and what historians now see as the early modern period. Naseby (1645) saw the defeat of King Charles I's main field army and the beginning of the end for his cause in the Civil War that engulfed the British Isles in the mid-seventeenth century. Given the impact battles can have, it is surprising that they have only recently begun to be considered in a heritage context. This paper looks at the UK experience of how battlefields have been considered historically, explores the heritage value they offer and looks at how their protection and presentation has developed over the last twenty-five or so years (English Heritage, 1995).

A SHORT HISTORY OF BATTLEFIELD MEMORY

The history of battlefield remembrance and memorialisation in the UK has been examined by Ian Atherton and Philip Morgan. They characterise this well in the synopsis to their 2011 paper on the subject when they say:

> Medieval battlefields [in the UK] were often commemorated by the erection of chapels and other permanent memorials, but after the Reformation they were seen as accidental landscapes which remained unmarked and were gradually reabsorbed into the agrarian pattern. From the eighteenth-century battlefields were rediscovered, first by antiquarians, who revived the practice of memorialization, and then by contemporaries who began again to preserve and memorialize the battlefields of the modern world. (Atherton & Morgan, 2011, p. 289).

There is insufficient space to expand in detail on Atherton & Morgan's argument in this article other than to say that for the medieval period battlefield commemoration through the erection of chapels and other memorials was associated with the victor's

Figure 1. The Battlefield Church at Shrewsbury (1403) built a few years after the battle 'for the souls of those who fell': author's own photograph.

religious responsibility to care for the souls of the dead from both sides (Figure 1). The reformation removed this obligation of intercession and the focus of commemoration switched to the living, for example through wounded soldier petitions for assistance and pensions, or in ink where battles were remembered through written accounts and their first marking on maps. In the eighteenth century, antiquarianism and its interest in the physical remains of the past led to battlefields becoming seen as places of importance because of the events that happened there. This was reflected in the erection of battlefield memorials at sites such as Stratton (1643), Lansdown (1643), Barnet (1471) and Mortimer's Cross (1461). Battlefield tourism also has its roots in this period with writers such as Daniel Defoe and Celia Fiennes recounting their visits to English battlefields as they toured the country. Atherton & Morgan (2011) argue that the climactic battle of Waterloo (1815) was a watershed for British battlefield tourism, with the site made famous in print and art being visited by the British middle classes as part of the renaissance in Continental tourism allowed by the end of the Napoleonic Wars (Defoe, 1971, pp. 67, 140, 266, 267, 356; Fiennes, 1838, pp. 18 & 135).

Figure 2. Memorial to John Hampden at Chalgrove (1643) battlefield erected in 1843 with a modern interpretation panel: author's own photograph.

Interest in battlefields, particularly those from the British Civil Wars (1642-1651), grew during the nineteenth century due to the dominance of the Whig interpretation of history. This posited history as a story of the recovery of English liberties following the Norman conquest. Within this, the outcome of the Civil Wars, where absolute monarchy was subjugated by Parliament, was seen as a key step in the establishment of a democratic constitution and a free society. This interest in the Wars led to commemoration and investigation of battlefield sites. An obelisk was erected at Naseby in 1823 to commemorate Parliament's victory over King Charles I whilst another was built at Chalgrove (1643) in 1843 to remember the mortal wounding there of the statesman John Hampden, who had been one of the five members of the House of Commons that the King had tried to arrest in January 1642, an act which set England on the road to civil war (Figure 2). Thomas Carlyle,

who published a book on the speeches and letters of the republican statemen and soldier Oliver Cromwell in 1845, commissioned Edward Fitzgerald to investigate the battlefield of Naseby in advance of publication so he could incorporate any findings. Fitzgerald spoke to local people to uncover traditions about the battle and found some of the battlefield grave-pits through excavation, arguably making him one of the first battlefield archaeologists. Toward the end of the century there was also an increase in literature focused solely on battlefields, reflecting a growing interest in the subject (Foard, 1995).[1]

Battlefields separately began to be marked on the new national mapping created by the Ordnance Survey from the start of the nineteenth century. The first editions of the Ordnance Survey maps covering the battlefields of Edgehill (1642) and Bosworth (1485) showed the words *Field of Battle* in differing typescripts. But it was not until 1923 that the crossed swords emblem associated with battlefields on British maps today made its first appearance on Ordnance survey maps; the use of a single sword to mark battles on English maps appears to date as far back as 1695 with the identification of Bosworth battlefield on Morden's map of Leicestershire. Other than being taught history in school, maps were, and probably remain, the principle means by which awareness of battlefields reach(ed) mainstream public consciousness. To mark battlefields, the Ordnance Survey appears to have relied on honorary local correspondents providing information about antiquarian sites on a voluntary basis. Unfortunately, whilst local knowledge provided an accurate location for some battle sites, for others it relied on traditions that were incorrect ((Foard and Curry, 2013, p. 3; Marsh, 2019).

The twentieth century saw the growth in UK groups with an interest in battlefields. The Cromwell Association, formed in 1937 to promote the life of Oliver Cromwell and the history of the seventeenth century, erected a monument at Marston Moor (1644) in 1939 to commemorate Cromwell's involvement in Parliament's victory there with its Scottish allies and the Association has since marked other Cromwellian battlefields, at Dunbar (1650) and Gainsborough (1643) (Figure 3) (*Unveiling of the Marston Moor Memorial*, 1939). The Sealed Knot society, which re-enacts the Civil War period and was formed in 1967, has also marked battlefields, including Hopton Heath (1643), Coleford (1643), Cheriton (1644) and Colby Moor (1645), with plaques (The Sealed Knot, 2020). Finally, the Battlefields Trust was established as a UK charity in 1992 with the sole purpose of preserving, researching, and presenting battlefields as educational and historical re-

[1] See for example Charles Hardwick (1882); C.R.B. Barrett (1896); and James Robson (1897).

Figure 3. The monument erected by the Cromwell Association at Marston Moor (1644) battlefield: author's own photograph.

sources (British Film Institute, 2020; Battlefields Trust, 2020b; Sealed Knot, 2020).

Such interest has arguably been reflected and reinforced through popular culture. Since AH Burne wrote *The Battlefields of England and More Battlefields of England* in the 1950s there has been a growth in battlefield literature, which often include sections on visiting such sites of conflict. The increase in UK television coverage of history also led to more 'battlefield' related programmes being aired. The eminent, and sadly now deceased, British military historian Richard Holmes' *War Walks* series was transmitted in 1996 and 1997 whilst battlefield archaeologists Tony Pollard and Neil Oliver presented two series of *Two Men in a Trench*, investigating various British battlefields, in 2002 and 2004 (Tv.com, 2020). The growth of special interest societies such as the Pike and Shot Society, Lance and Longbow Society and re-enactment groups that cover a wide range of historical periods is also part of this dynamic that is both encouraged by and encourages a desire to understand and explore battlefields (Burne, 1950, 1952; Holmes, 1996, 1997; TV.com, 2020).

This contemporary interest in battlefields needs to be explained. As Atherton and Morgan have argued, for the wars of the twenti-

eth century memorialisation bears a greater resemblance to medieval than to early modern traditions through its treatment of the bodies of the fallen as sacrosanct. The religious connotations of this are clear and, in part, no doubt reflect the generational proximity of those who died in the battles of the First and Second World Wars to those alive today. The practice in these conflicts of burying the dead initially on the battlefield and then in cemeteries close to the fighting, rather than repatriating their bodies, has also probably strengthened the link between the place of battle and their sacrifice. However, the distance in time from the battles fought in the medieval and early modern period make these associations unlikely for those sites of conflict. For the Cromwell Association the battles where Cromwell fought are part of his legacy and for the Sealed Knot battlefields are places where the events it re-enacts took place. The Battlefields Trust's focus is on the historical and educational benefits of battlefields, again taking their significance beyond issues of sacrifice and remembrance of the fallen. For these organisations it is arguably the heritage value that is key in explaining their interest in battlefields (Atherton & Morgan, 2011).

THE CONTEMPORARY VALUE OF BATTLEFIELD HERITAGE

Many people when asked about the value of a battlefield comment, at least initially, that it is 'just a field', not to be differentiated from any other part of the agrarian landscape. When pressed some can identify where the value in battlefields heritage lies. The most obvious are perhaps the landscape and archaeology associated with sites of conflict. Whilst there has been considerable change in the countryside in the time since the last major action was fought on UK soil at Culloden in 1746, with more extensive enclosure and the introduction of modern farming techniques altering the landscape, there is still much that sites of battle can reveal about engagements which occurred long ago. The perspective of commanders can be recreated, ancient hedgerows and the contouring of the landscape which created dead ground remain and the conditions underfoot which played such a significant part in battles such as Flodden (1513) can be experienced after a period of wet weather. The ground therefore helps our understanding of battle and is itself a historical resource.

What lies in the ground is also crucially important to the understanding of battlefields as, for English battlefields, Glenn Foard and Richard Morris' work has shown. From ancient times,

Figure 4. An archaeological survey of the Stow (1646) battlefield underway: author's own photograph.

the act of battle has deposited the remains of fighting. Roman lead sling-shot, the arrow heads and ordnance shot of the medieval period and lead small arms bullets and caps for bandoleer charges from early modern warfare have all been found within the top soil on sites of conflict. Collecting and recording these in a systematic way allows a greater understanding of the course of a battle; where the fighting was most concentrated, which types of weapons (and therefore types of soldiers) were engaged in particular parts of the battlefield and, when used with contemporary drill books, potentially where units were initially deployed. Such archaeology has also been used to find battlefields where the location has been lost or forgotten, for example at Bosworth (1485) or Teutoburg Forest battle at Kalkriese (9CE) (Foard and Curry, 2013; Foard and Morris, 2012; Museum und Park Kalkriese, n.d.).

In her 2013 MSc dissertation on *The Intangible Value of Designated Battlefields in England and the Implications for the Planning System*, Victoria Barrett identified further heritage value in battlefields through their tourism and educational potential as well as the sense of identity or place they create. She highlighted how their intangible nature limits these aspects of heritage value and noted how interpretation can begin to address such constraints. Inter-

Figure 5. Bosworth (1485) battlefield visitor's centre: Julian Humphrys.

pretation through visitor centres or on-site interpretation boards explain the events that occurred during the battle and the importance of the landscape, mediating what can be seen to something that is beyond 'just a field'. Visitor centres exist for only a small number of British battlefields, at Hastings, (1066), Bannockburn (1314), Shrewsbury (1403), Bosworth (1485) and Culloden (1746) (Figure 5), but interpretive schemes, involving one or more information boards and, in some cases, battlefield trails, have been established at many more. Naseby (1645) and Towton (1461) are perhaps the most developed of these types of site, offering multiple information boards and a walking or driving trail around them. Such facilities undoubtedly attract tourists. In 2010, Hastings, Bannockburn, Bosworth and Culloden reported visits by tens of thousands of people and in 2011 the Naseby Battlefield Project estimated that 12,000 people a year were using the interpretation at the battlefield. An English Heritage teachers' guide to using battlefields and other conflict sites published in 1995 highlighted the value of interpretation in identifying suitable sites for study and such battlefield interpretation has allowed productive visits and the exploitation of educational potential at the above sites by both schools and adult learners[2] (Barrett, 2013; Miles, 2013, p. 233; Planel, 1995).

[2] The figures for visitor numbers for these battlefield sites were Hastings (137,805), Bannockburn (50,143), Bosworth (40,297) and Culloden (99,335) (Miles, 2013). I am grateful to Martin-Marix Evans for the information about Naseby.

Barrett concluded in her study that identity and the sense of place that battlefields create were particularly intangible and that they did not «contribute as strongly to identity creation because of the absence of a physical object or building which would provide a foundation for place-building». Whilst this is no doubt true to an extent, the Battlefields Trust's anecdotal experience is that, with or without interpretation, «battlefields are local issues»; few people have an interest in battlefields *per se* but many more are interested in their local battlefield as part of a desire to understand the history of the place where they live. This manifest itself in the numbers of local people willing to participate in walks led across or talks about battlefields and become involved in projects to investigate or interpret such sites (Barrett, 2013).

PROTECTING AND PROMOTING BATTLEFIELD HERITAGE – THE UK EXPERIENCE OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS

In 1991 an international conference on 'Ancient Battlefields as National Treasures' was held at the University of Leicester. The impetus for the conference was the threat of the proposed A14 road crossing the Naseby battlefield. Delegates to the conference agreed to set up a national organisation in the UK to work to protect battlefields and in 1992 the Battlefields Trust was established as a volunteer based organisation dedicated to the preservation, research and presentation of battlefields as educational and historical resources. The Trust, which was registered as a charity in 1993, was the first national UK organisation solely dedicated to preserving and promoting battlefields and followed the establishment of US Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites in 1987 (American Battlefield Trust, 2020).[3]

The creation of the Battlefields Trust was closely followed by a decision by English Heritage (now Historic England, the UK government body charged with looking after England's heritage) to designate nationally important battlefields as heritage assets. In 1995 it published its first register of historic battlefields in England, identifying 43 (now 47) battle sites ranging from Maldon (991CE) to Sedgemoor (1685) (Figure 6) (Historic England, 2017). Registration was restricted to sites which met certain criteria. The two main ones were that the battle must have been historically significant and that it should be securely located. Other factors to be considered included landscape integrity, archaeological potential, how well documented the battle was, biographic association with key historical figures and whether there were any commemora-

[3] The US National Parks service commenced preservation of US battlefield sites in the 1920s and 1930s.

tive structures associated with the battle (Historic England, 2017; Piekarz, 2017).

The purpose of registration was to highlight the importance of battlefields and establish their designation as a material consideration in the development planning process in England. Whilst registration did not prevent development occurring on battlefields, it did mean for the first time that the importance of such sites had to be considered before a planning application affecting a battlefield could be agreed. Subsequent changes in planning guidance have now created circumstances where a planning application in England that causes substantial harm to a registered battlefield site should be 'wholly exceptional' whilst applications causing less than substantial harm need to be judged by balancing the harms caused with the wider public benefit of development. Whilst far from prefect, this framework offers a degree of protection from development threats to the most important English battlefields (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019a).

Following this lead, Historic Environment Scotland and Cadw, the Welsh heritage body, established their own Battlefield Inventories in 2011 and 2017 respectively. Scotland broadly followed the English Heritage approach and designated 37 (now 40) sites of national importance (Historic Environment Scotland, n.d.). The Welsh authorities sought to identify as many Welsh sites of conflict, including sieges, as possible and recorded over 700 such places. It also conducted research on 47 priority conflict sites and published the results of this work (Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales, 2017). The Welsh inventory created no obligations for planning authorities but did allow for battlefields of sufficient importance, or parts thereof, to be designated as scheduled monuments which would then afford protection within the planning system (Historic Environment Scotland, n.d.; Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales, 2017).

Elsewhere in Europe recognition of battlefields as sites of heritage value appears to be limited. In Spain, for example, there is no specific legal protection for battlefields and only two battle sites, Somosierra (1808) and Salamanca (Los Arapiles) (1812), have been identified as protected cultural assets by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (Zurita-Aldeguer & Mira Rico, 2018).[4] In Germany, as Andre Schürger (2016, 69-70) has noted, there has been no tradition of preserving battlefields and it was only in 2009 that Lützen (1632) became the first protected battlefield after extensive archaeological work there.

[4] I am grateful to Juan Antonio Mira Rico for this reference.

Figure 6. Registered English Battlefields: Author's image

Aside from the threat from development, there are a further three ways that the heritage potential of battlefields can be put at risk. These are: non-systematic metal detecting by hobby detectorists which removes the archaeology of battlefields without recording; the use of modern farming techniques and certain agri-chemicals which can damage the archaeology of battlefields either by damaging/displacing artefacts in the top soil or by changing the Ph value of the soil which can increase the rate of decay of battle related objects; and the practice of holding re-enactments or other large scale social events, such as festivals, on battlefield sites. While re-enactments can play a valuable role in raising public interest in and awareness about battlefields, if they take place on sites of conflict and reproduction equipment, such as arrow heads, powder caps or buttons, are accidentally dropped and not recovered, they can, after several years, become confused with those from the time of the battle and distort the archaeological picture. Separately, events held on battlefields which lead to small metal detritus such as ring-pulls and coins being dropped make battlefield survey work using metal detectors exceptionally time consuming to the point of being impossible due to the resulting volume of metal items (Battlefields Trust, 2016).

In response to threats to battlefields, the Battlefields Trust has established measures to address them commensurate with the resource constraints of a volunteer-led organisation. It has appointed a dedicated Research and Threats Co-ordinator to respond to planning applications affecting battlefields and address other threats (Battlefields Trust, 2020c). It has separately established a network of local representatives to report on issues affecting their battlefield and created an independent Battlefield Panel to provide expert planning, archaeological, weapons and historical advice to the Trust's officers when responding to threats. Following changes in government planning guidance in England in 2019, the Trust wrote to each planning authority covering registered battlefields asking that they inform it of any planning applications affecting such sites. The response to this was overwhelmingly positive and has consequently improved the Trust's early warning of threats. The Trust has also established a policy on metal detecting on registered battlefields and their environs and has created good practice guidance for those wishing to undertake survey work (Battlefields Trust, 2020a). It is planning further work with re-enactor groups to warn of the risks of re-enacting on battlefields and has advised hobby metal detectorists on how they can best protect the archaeological value of these sites (Battlefields Trust, 2020c; Battlefields Trust, 2020a).

Whilst such organisational approaches to preserving battlefields are important, the Battlefields Trust judges that increased public interest in and awareness of battlefields is in many ways their best defence; if people value and care about their local battlefield they are more likely to raise objections if and when it comes under threat. Such concern and interest can also be translated into support for local projects to communicate and interpret battlefields better, enhancing the intangible benefits of such heritage as discussed above. The Trust has worked with a large number of local groups to establish projects, including at Mortimer's Cross (1461), Edgcote (1469), Barnet (1471), Flodden (1513), Edgehill (1642), Brentford and Turnham Green (1642), Roundway Down (1643), Newbury (1643 and 1644), Cropredy Bridge (1644), Marston Moor (1644), Naseby (1645), Langport (1645) and Worcester (1651) where interpretation boards have been or are in the process of being installed (Figure 7). Some of these projects the Trust has led after obtaining funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund. It has separately worked with local groups and the Church of England in establishing small battlefield related exhibitions in churches associated with battles at Radway, near Edgehill (1642), and at Westonzoyland, near Sedgemoor (1685).

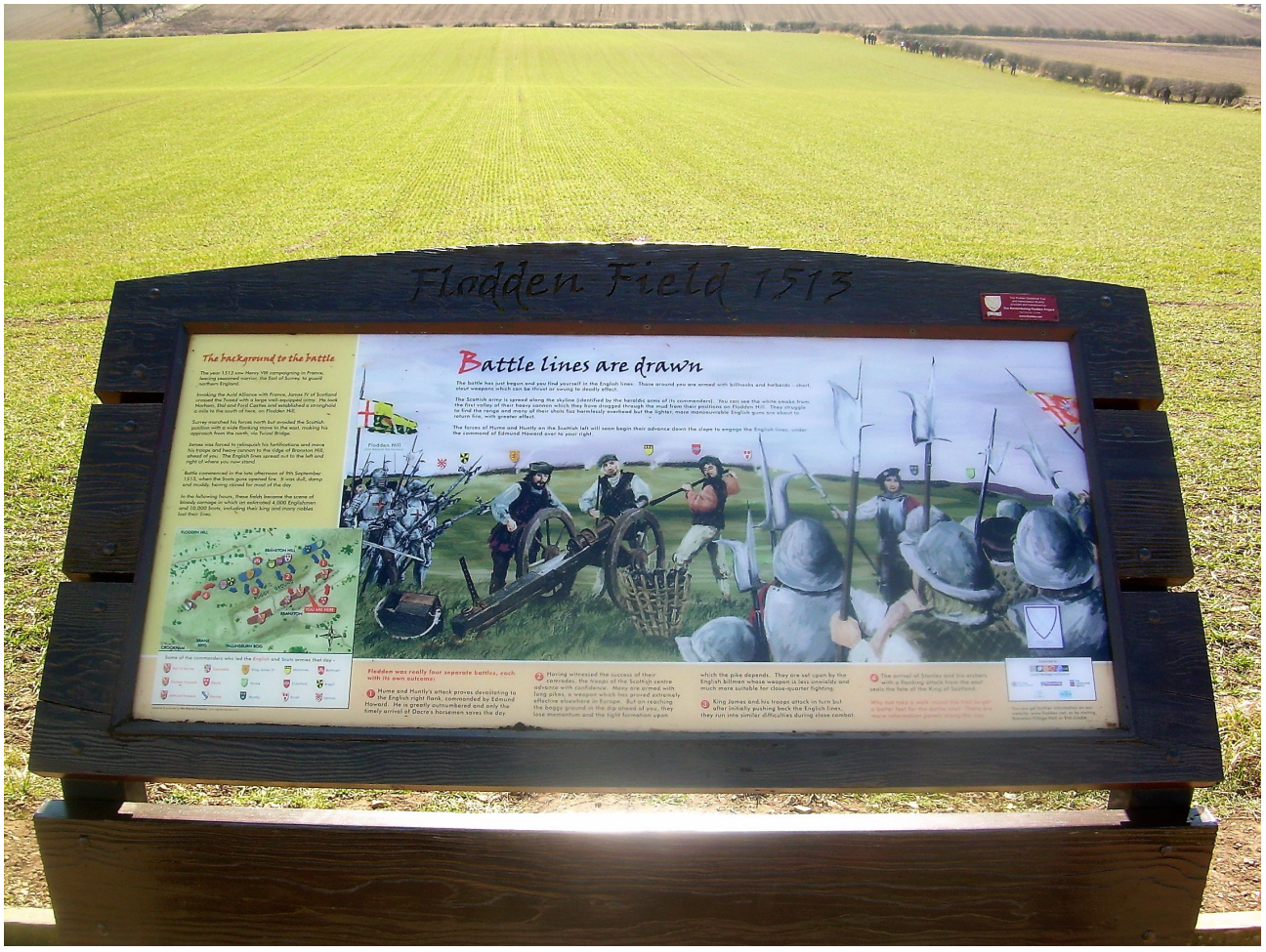

Figure 7. Interpretation board at Flodden (1513) battlefield: author's own photograph.

In interpreting battlefields, the Trust is conscious of the contested nature of the narrative around some sites. In response to justified criticism it has adjusted some of its own website information to reflect a more nuanced view of such actions, for example by making the entry for Marston Moor (1644) on its Resource Centre less Cromwell-centric and acknowledging more the significant contribution of the Scottish army fighting with English parliamentarians (Battlefields Trust, 2020d). Moreover, as Tony Pollard has pointed out, language itself can sometime be problematic in describing events - was, for example. the attempt to restore a Stuart king to the British throne in 1745 an 'uprising' or a 'rebellion'? - and this also needs careful consideration when producing interpretive text. As a charity the Trust must also avoid any political bias when presenting battlefields. This though is largely unproblematic as, save for battlefields such as Culloden (1746) and Bannockburn (1314) which have been the focus of Scottish nationalism in the past, UK sites of conflict have rarely been politicised. The more common challenge is the suggestion that the Trust's in-

terpretation of the battle sources is incorrect, which it manages by eschewing a single preferred perspective and presenting credible alternatives (Battlefields Trust, 2020d; Pollard, 2009, pp. 1 & 13).

Local battlefield and other amenity societies with interests in sites of conflict have also grown in number since the early 1990s and include well established societies such as the one covering Northamptonshire battlefields and others at Towton (1461), Naseby (1645), Tewkesbury (1471), Worcester (1651) , Fulford (1066), Prestonpans (1745) and Pinkie Cleugh (1547). Others have been set-up to counter development on the battlefields of Culloden (1746) and Killiecrankie (1689) whilst local heritage societies have developed battlefield related projects at Edgehill (1642), Sedgemoor (1685), Barnet (1471) and Langport (1645). Such groups are vital to battlefield heritage as they can create and maintain local interest and help realise the tangible and intangible heritage value of conflict sites. The Battlefields Trust engages with and supports projects run by such groups, including through small grant donations and, where appropriate, shares the good practice that it sees from them across the country. For example, work undertaken by the Tewkesbury Battlefield Society to paint the coats of arms of those who participated in the 1471 battle there and hang them from shops in the town in advance of the annual medieval festival was adopted by a project improving public awareness of the battle of Barnet (1471) on advice from the Trust. It is separately attempting to establish a battlefield partnership at Evesham (1265), involving the local councils, museum, Simon de Montfort Society and annual festival committee, based on a model that works for the nearby battlefield at Worcester. Such engagement with different battlefield stakeholders has also allowed the Trust to work constructively with Historic England, which does not have the capacity to deal with multiple individual battlefield groups and has asked the Trust to represent to it the views of such societies and explain its own position on certain issues to them (Battle of Barnet Project, 2018).

As a national organisation the Trust is also able to mobilise its 1,400 members to support battlefield related campaigns and can convene interested parties. It played a central role in the campaign against a proposed development at Bosworth battlefield in 2018, establishing an agreed position with organisations such as the Richard III Society and using its links to involve other stakeholders. The Trust's involvement with all UK battlefields has separately enabled it to build expertise in dealing with development threats to sites of conflict. Its engagement with local planning authorities and Historic England has allowed the identification of successful approaches to opposing planning applications as well

as the circumstances where objections are not necessary. This has helped build its credibility with national and local government stakeholders as evidenced by the specific reference to the Trust in July 2019 changes to official planning guidance on the Historic Environment (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019b).

The Trust is also a natural interlocutor for other national battlefield bodies such as the Scottish Battlefields Trust, which contributes to and whose members receive the Battlefields Trust's quarterly publication *Battlefield*, and the American Battlefield Trust. It has also supported overseas battlefield groups and individuals engaged with sites of conflict, particularly those attempting to address development threats. As a general rule the Trust will not seek to intervene in an overseas battlefield matter unless requested to do so by a local interlocutor as it takes the view that intervention by a UK organisation in foreign planning matters where no local concern has been expressed is likely to be counterproductive. However, in response to requests for assistance it has supported efforts by the American Battlefield Trust to protect the battlefield at Princeton (1777) and by Miguel Angel Martin Mas to limit the impact of a new motorway on the battlefield at Salamanca (Los Arapiles) (1812) in Spain. In France, at the prompting of a concerned local resident the Trust wrote to the local authorities in 2018 about a proposed windfarm that would have affected the battlefield at Agincourt (1415) and to the Belgian authorities about planned development at Oudenarde (1708) following a request from a concerned local (Esdaile, 2011; Morrison, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

The importance attached to sites of battle has varied over time as religious attitudes and interest in their history and heritage have changed. Whilst there has been a focus on battlefield sites for their historical significance since the eighteenth century, an understanding of their overall heritage value and the need to preserve it is a relatively recent phenomenon. The introduction of limited protections for battlefields in UK planning legislation has taken place only in the last 25 years and the frameworks involved do not automatically prevent development. Wider threats to the archaeology of battlefields from hobby metal detectorists, modern agricultural techniques and inappropriate use of such sites remain. Moreover, the establishment of national organisations dedicated solely to their preservation and promotion has only occurred in the UK and US over the last 30 years and there has been no esta-

blishment of other national organisations elsewhere as far as this author is aware.

If battlefields are to be protected and promoted, local and national battlefield organisations are equally important. Local groups can galvanise and maintain interest in their battlefields, bringing the maxim that 'battlefields are local issues' to life and helping realise both the tangible and intangible heritage value of such sites. A national battlefield organisation can appeal to a wider community and therefore have a louder voice when campaigning on battlefield issues. This allows it to engage better with national heritage authorities, which do not have the capacity to deal with multiple groups and which welcome the opportunity to work through a single organisation that maintains contact with local societies. Such contacts separately allow the convening of interested stakeholders in protecting and promoting sites of conflict and facilitate the better sharing of good practice. Having to deal with battlefield threats on a countrywide basis also develops deeper expertise within national organisations, particularly in successfully addressing battlefield planning proposals. Finally, national battlefield organisations tend to be best placed to engage internationally given their wider remit.

Whilst battlefields continue to be seen by many as 'hallowed ground' where the fallen should be remembered, particularly for conflicts of the twentieth century, the interest in fields of conflict from earlier times appears now to be focused largely on their heritage value. Battlefield landscape and archaeology undoubtedly help understanding of the course of a battle and offer the most obvious examples of such value. But there are other, less tangible, benefits that battlefields can provide: the potential for increased tourism and with it economic benefits to the surrounding area; a teaching environment where the past can be brought to life; and a sense of identity and place for locations where, perhaps, very little has otherwise happened. However, these benefits need to be made tangible if their value is to be realised. An explanation of the battle and battlefield through interpretation is largely seen as the best way to release this potential as, without it, for many, a battlefield remains «just a field».

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